

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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O P 161408Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7287
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 13612

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINS, CT, UK, US
SUBJECT: RELEASE OF WESTERN JOURNALIST

REF: STATE 193700

1. SUMMARY. BY TELEPHONE ON AUGUST 15 AND IN A PERSONAL VISIT ON AUGUST 16, GOLDSMITH RECOUNTED HIS EXPERIENCES WHILE DETAINED IN CAE. AUGUST 16 VISIT PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GOLDSMITH TO MEET WITH ASST. SECRETARY MOOSE. GOLDSMITH IS FLYING TO NEW YORK AUGUST 16 AND THENCE TO WASHINGTON ON AUGUST 18. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE EVENING OF AUGUST 15, AP CORRESPONDENT MICHAEL GOLDSMITH TELEPHONED EMBOFF WHO HAS BEEN HANDLING CASE AND PROVIDED A LENGTHY SUMMARY OF DETAILS SURROUNDING HIS ARREST, DETENTION, AND ULTIMATE RELEASE. THIS ACCOUNT WAS SUPPLEMENTED WHEN GOLDSMITH VISITED THE EMBASSY ON AUGUST 16 TO OBTAIN A US VISA; HIS VISIT
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COINCIDED WITH THE PRESENCE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE AND GOLDSMITH BRIEFLY RECOUNTED HIS EXPERIENCE TO MOOSE.

3. GOLDSMITH IS CONVINCED THAT THE BASIS FOR HIS ARREST LAY IN HIS HAVING FILED BY TELEX FROM BANGUI TO JOHANNESBURG (PARIS 1785 - NOTAL). THE TELEXED COMMENTS OF THE AP OPERATOR IN JOHANNESBURG WERE BADLY GARBLED,

AND THE CAE AUTHORITIES LATER PRESENTED THESE GARBLED TEXTS TO GOLDSMITH AS "PROOF" THAT HE HAD RECEIVED ENCODED INSTRUCTIONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA FOR PASSAGE TO A SOUTH AFRICAN "AGENT" IN BANGUI.

4. ON JULY 14, GOLDSMITH WAS BROUGHT INTO THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE. AS HE BOWED AND BEGAN TO SAY, "YOUR MAJESTY," BOKASSA RAISED HIS CEREMONIAL WALKING STICK AND STRUCK GOLDSMITH ON THE FOREHEAD WITH FULL FORCE, KNOCKING HIM UNCONSCIOUS. WHEN GOLDSMITH CAME TO A FEW SECONDS LATER HE WAS ON THE FLOOR, BEING VIGOROUSLY KICKED BY BOKASSA AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL ENTOURAGE.

5. GOLDSMITH SPENT THE NEXT SIX DAYS IN A PUNISHMENT CELL ABOUT SEVEN FEET BY SIX FEET IN SIZE. HE WAS HANDCUFFED DURING THIS ENTIRE PERIOD (WHEN THE PRISON DIRECTOR NOTED THAT THE HANDCUFFS WERE CUTTING INTO GOLDSMITH'S WRISTS, HE TIGHTENED THEM STILL FURTHER), AND FOR THREE DAYS, GOLDSMITH WAS IN LEG IRONS AS WELL. DURING THE TIME SPENT IN THE PUNISHMENT CELL, GOLDSMITH WAS GIVEN ONLY MANIOC AND WATER TO EAT.

6. THE SITUATION IMPROVED SOMEWHAT ON JULY 21, WHEN GOLDSMITH WAS MOVED TO A LARGER CELL. ON JULY 22, HE RECEIVED MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR THE FIRST TIME, WHEN THE EMPEROR'S PERSONAL MEDICAL ORDERLY PUT SIX STITCHES IN

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THE HEAD WOUND HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE IMPERIAL WALKING STICK. FROM JULY 22 ONWARD, GOLDSMITH RECEIVED DAILY VISITS FROM THE MEDICAL ORDERLY, AND BEGINNING ON JULY 26, HE WAS GIVEN ONE GOOD "EUROPEAN" MEAL DAILY FROM THE SAFARI HOTEL.

7. ON AUGUST 11, GOLDSMITH WAS ALLOWED TO CONFRONT GABONESE PRESIDENT BONGO'S PERSONAL EMISSARY AT THE CAE FOREIGN MINISTRY (BANGUI 1706, STATE 187695), AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE BEGAN TO HOPE THAT HE MIGHT BE RELEASED BEFORE BOKASSA'S DECEMBER 4 CORONATION.

8. GOLDSMITH WAS SERIOUSLY INTERROGATED FOR THE FIRST AND ONLY TIME IN A GRUELLING, 5-6 HOUR SESSION ON AUGUST 12. HE WAS FORCED TO SIGN A LENGTHY PROCESS-VERBAL ALLEGEDLY BASED ON HIS NOTES. BY THIS TIME, GOLDSMITH HAD DIFFICULTY REMEMBERING WHAT HE HAD OR HAD NOT WRITTEN IN HIS NOTES, BUT EACH TIME HE PROTESTED A PARTICULAR ITEM, HE WAS THREATENED WITH BEING THROWN BACK IN PRISON. GOLDSMITH'S INTERROGATORS KNEW, FROM HIS NOTES, THE IDENTITIES OF CAE PERSONALITIES RECOMMENDED TO HIM BY VARIOUS OFFICERS OF EMBASSY BANGUI. TO THE BEST

OF GOLDSMITH'S RECOLLECTION, THE "MOST COMPROMISING"

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STATEMENT IN THE PROCES-VERBAL WAS A STATEMENT ATTRIBUTE
TO AMBASSADOR QUANTON TO THE EFFECT THAT WHILE THE
CENTRAL AFRICAN PEOPLE SUPPORTED THE CREATION OF THE
EMPIRE, THE CAE REMAINED A DICTATORSHIP. GOLDSMITH'S
INTERROGATORS ALSO KEPT RETURNING TO AN ALLEGATION THAT
AT THE MOMENT OF GOLDSMITH'S ARREST, CHARGE SMITH HAD
ATTEMPTED TO INTERVENE, CLAIMING THAT GOLDSMITH WAS AN
AMERICAN CITIZEN. GOLDSMITH'S EXPLANATION THAT AN
ASSUMPTION THAT AN AP CORRESPONDENT WAS AN AMERICAN
CITIZEN WAS A NATURAL MISTAKE WAS BRUSQUELY DISMISSED.

9. ON AUGUST 12 FOR TWO HOURS, AND AGAIN ON AUGUST 14
FOR THREE HOURS, GOLDSMITH WAS TREATED TO PERSONAL
HARANGUES FROM BOKASSA. BOKASSA CLAIMED THAT GOLDSMITH
SHOULD THANK HIS WIFE EVERY DAY FOR HAVING SAVED HIS
LIFE - "SHE FOUND THE ONLY WAY TO MY HEART" - AND SAID
THAT HE HAD BEEN DETERMINED TO RESIST ALL DIPLOMATIC
INITIATIVES FROM WHATEVER QUARTER UNDERTAKEN FOR GOLD-
SMITH'S RELEASE.

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10. BOKASSA'S CHOICEST INVECTIVE WAS RESERVED FOR EMBASSY BANGUI, PARTICULARLY AMBASSADOR QUANTON AND DCM SMITH. BOKASSA REPEATEDLY SAID, "WE'LL FIX THEM," AND HE BOASTED THAT HE HAD NOT HESITATED TO ARREST AND HAVE SHOT AN AMERICAN FIRST SECRETARY (SIC) WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE 1976 ASSASSINATION PLOT (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO THE EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PLOT). BOKASSA ALSO RAILED AGAINST THE PEACE CORPS, CLAIMING THAT THE PCV'S, WHO CLAIMED TO BE DIGGING WELLS FOR WATER, WERE ACTUALLY SERVANTS OF AMERICAN ESPIONAGE.

11. IN RELEASING GOLDSMITH, BOKASSA WARNED HIM TO TREAD CAREFULLY IN THE FUTURE AND ALLUDED DARKLY TO THE WORLD-WIDE REACH OF THE IMPERIAL COURT, AN ALLUSION WHICH GOLDSMITH INTERPRETED AS A WARNING TO KEEP SILENT ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE CAE. ALTHOUGH HE REALIZES THAT THESE THREATS WERE PROBABLY BLUSTER, GOLDSMITH IS FULLY CONVINCED THAT BOKASSA IS A HOMICIDAL PSYCHOTIC AND HE DOES NOT RPT NOT PLAN TO MAKE PUBLIC THE DETAILS OF HIS BEATINGS AND MALTREATMENT IN THE CAE. GOLDSMITH HAS ASKED THAT WE FULLY PROTECT HIS CONFIDENCE, AND WE HAVE ASSURED HIM THAT WE WILL DO SO.

12. GOLDSMITH IS REMARKABLY CHEERFUL FOLLOWING HIS ORDEAL, AND HIS APPEARANCE HAS EVEN LED TO A MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITION OF HIS MOTHER. HE IS FLYING TO NEW YORK (WHERE HE MAY CONTACT USUN) ON AUGUST 16, AND HE PLANS TO GO ON TO WASHINGTON ON ABOUT AUGUST 18. GOLDSMITH WILL CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT ON ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON (HE TENTATIVELY PLANS TO CALL HABIB AND/OR HODDING CARTER), AND HE WOULD BE PLEASED

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TO PROVIDE A FULL BRIEFING ON HIS EXPERIENCES TO THE DEPARTMENT. ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE SUGGESTS THAT ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR GOLDSMITH TO SEE AF/C DIRECTOR LANNON WALKER AND ACTION DIRECTOR SAM BROWN.

13. GOLDSMITH IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE EFFORTS MADE ON HIS BEHALF BY USG AND PARTICULARLY HAS ASKED US TO RELAY TO QUANTON AND SMITH HIS THANKS FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE AND HIS APOLOGIES FOR ALL THE DIFFICULTIES CAUSED THEM AND EMBASSY BANGUI BY HIS DETENTION.

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